



# Planning Program

## EDA PLANNING PROGRAM

The Economic Development Administration (EDA) established the **Planning Program** to assist local and regional organizations (District Organizations, Indian Tribes, and other eligible entities) with their short- and long-term planning efforts. EDA's Planning Program is one of six economic development assistance programs the agency operates under PWEDA. The purpose of the program is to facilitate economic development strategies in local communities and larger regions by providing funds for planning and guidelines to help guide organizations engaged in the planning process.

Potential applicants preparing a request for Planning Program grants should work with the designated EDA Regional Office staff in the early development stages of the application. The Regional Office staff will assist the potential applicant with the unique aspects of their grant request. Appropriate EDA Regional Office staff information may be found on EDA website (EDA website link is provided below).

### Definitions

REGION or Regional means geographic areas that need not be contiguous or defined by political boundaries, but should constitute a cohesive area capable of undertaking self-sustained economic development.

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION means at least a majority of the counties or other areas within the proposed District, as determined by EDA, to support the economic development activities of the District.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT or EDD means a Region in the United States designated by EDA as an Economic Development District.

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS) means a strategic planning document and process that helps guide the economic growth and development of communities or regions. The strategy promotes sustainable development by providing mechanisms for coordinating efforts and regional assets for combining resources of the community, business and local government, and for promoting processes to create jobs, and foster diversified economies.

## PLANNING PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM OVERVIEW

EDA provides Partnership Planning grants to approximately 380 EDA-designated Economic Development Districts throughout the Nation. In addition, EDA provides Partnership Planning grants to approximately 58 Indian Tribes to help organize and assist with the implementation of economic development activities within their areas. Planning funds are also available for other planning organizations are typically recognized by the State in which they reside as multi-jurisdictional Councils of Governments, Regional Commissions, or Planning and Development Centers. The majority of funding under the Planning Program provides Partnership Planning grants for Indian Tribes and EDA-designated Economic Development Districts.

Planning Partnership grants supports planning organizations to develop, replace, or implement regional economic development plans, or specifically, the EDA required Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) which is a major component of the Planning Program. These CEDS and alternative

plans are used to stimulate and guide the economic development efforts of a community or region. In addition, the grants enable planning organizations to manage and coordinate the development and implementation of CEDS to address the unique needs of their respective regions. Effectively implemented strategies lead to economic development and improved development capacity, thus supporting sustainable regional economic development. Specific guidelines for the development of a CEDS are located at <http://www.eda.gov/PDF/CEDSFlyer081706.pdf>.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT DESIGNATION REQUIREMENTS

To become a designated Economic Development District, an applicant must have a CEDS document and meet EDA's regional distress criteria. Specifically, the EDA may designate a Region as an Economic Development District if the applicant demonstrates the following:

**Area Distress.** The District/Regional Organization must contain at least (one) geographic area that meets EDA's economic distress criteria. EDA's economic distress criteria is located at: <http://www.eda.gov/PDF/HowtoApplyforEDAInvestments.pdf>

**Capacity.** The District/Regional Organization must demonstrate a sufficient population size with adequate resources to foster economic development across multiple geographic areas.

**Collaborative and Integrated Regional Strategy.** The District/Regional Organization must have an approved CEDS that has also been approved by the State and the respective EDA Regional Office.

**Regional Commitment.** The District/Regional Organization must obtain commitments from major counties or other areas within the proposed District, as determined by the EDA, to support economic development activities.

**State Concurrence.** The District/Regional Organization must obtain concurrences with the designation request from State (or States) in which the District is located.

In addition, the applicant must provide economic justification for the proposed designation or boundary modification if it is an existing EDD, and how this action will advance EDA's mission in the Region (This information is drawn from or is informed by the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) document) by demonstrating at least, but not limited to, the following:

- Shared economic and community development challenges and opportunities with the existing area covered by the District;
- Shared employment patterns, workforce characteristics, or a workforce development strategy with the existing area covered by the District;
- Shared transportation access issues and/or transportation networks with the existing area covered by the District;
- Common industry or business clusters within the District's existing boundaries;
- Shared natural resource planning (e.g., watershed planning) with the areas located within the District's existing boundaries; and
- Shared resources that affect economic development, such as high-speed telecommunications access

## DISTRICT MODIFICATION

The EDA may modify an EDD's geographic boundaries upon the request of the EDD and with the concurrence of the State or States affected (unless such concurrence is waived by the Assistant Secretary). This modification may include adding new counties, or reducing the number of counties serviced by the EDD to other District Organizations. This modification will be based on the District Organization's justification for modification (see EDD Designation Program Requirements) and if the EDA determines that such modification will contribute to a more effective program for economic development.

## HOW TO APPLY

Upon complying with the aforementioned requirements, the District must request an EDA District Designation by working with the respective EDA Regional Office to develop a District Designation Package.

The Designation Package will include the following:

- Background on the Region including composition and location of the proposed EDD. This background includes information on the geographic areas that comprise the new (or modified) EDD. The background also includes a general discussion of the area(s) proposed for designation, total population, and a description of the physical and socio-economic characteristics, including unemployment, per-capita income (PCI), identification and description of the EDA eligible area(s), and other relevant data.
- Explanation of the economic justification for the proposed designation or boundary modification and how this action will advance EDA's mission in the Region.
- Maps of the proposed EDD or proposed EDD boundary modification which indicates locations within the State(s), counties, urban centers, eligible areas, important transportation nodes and networks, and significant geographic features that impact economic development, such as wetlands, flood plains, and identified Brownfields. Where possible, these maps should illustrate the spatial economic linkages between the counties included in the new or modified District.
- Action Request Letters
  - Letter from the Chair of the District Organization requesting the action. This letter should be written on District Organization letterhead and reflect the reasons why the organization is requesting this action.
  - Letter(s) of concurrence from the State(s). This letter(s) should be written on State letterhead, clearly demonstrates support from the State regarding the proposed action, and includes a list of counties in the proposed EDD. The letter also clearly affirms State approval of the District Organization's CEDS.
  - County resolutions or letters of support from at least a majority of the relevant geographic areas for a designation, and for proposed new geographic areas for a modification. This letter(s) should be written on the letterhead of the entity and

clearly States support for the designation from the cities or towns in the relevant geographic areas.

➤ Applicant District Organization Information

- Articles of Incorporation, By-Laws, Intergovernmental Agreement, and/or Enabling Legislation for the applicant District Organization.
- List of participating jurisdictions and a rationale for excluding any non-participants contained within the geographic boundary.
- Governing Board and Executive Committee membership roster for the applicant District Organization.
- District Organization staff roster that includes each staff member's educational background and professional experience.

Once approved by EDA, the Economic Development District will receive a designation letter from the Assistant Secretary announcing their designation. In addition, newly designated EDDs will receive Planning Partnership grants to manage and coordinate the development and implementation of CEDS and other economic development planning activities to address the unique needs of their respective regions.

Questions regarding the Planning Program, including eligibility requirements, preparation of a designation package, and other grant related procedures should be referred to the EDA Regional Office that serves the applicant's State or Region. For additional information, see PWEDA (42 U.S.C. § 3171) and EDA's regulations as set out at 13 C.F.R. § 304.1 through 13 C.F.R. § 304.4 which can be found at <http://www.eda.gov/InvestmentsGrants/Lawsreg.xml>. Regional Office contact information may be found at [www.eda.gov/AboutEDA/Regions.xml](http://www.eda.gov/AboutEDA/Regions.xml).